

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 727  
By Womack

A RESOLUTION to recognize Jerry Benefield on the occasion of  
his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those persons who in their years of work have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Benefield is one such estimable person who has served with probity for almost 20 years with Nissan Motor Manufacturing Corporation U.S.A.; he retired effective April 1, 2000, as its President and Chief Operating Officer since 1988; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Benefield joined Nissan in October 1980 as vice president of manufacturing of the soon-to-be-built Smyrna plant. As a member of the startup team, he was instrumental in building Nissan's first manufacturing venture in this nation, hiring the plant's first employees and overseeing production of the first truck, prior to assuming the helm as President in January, 1988; and

WHEREAS, under Jerry Benefield's twelve-year leadership, the company completed a \$490 million expansion and added 2,000 employees for the addition of the Altima production in the early 1990s; added engine assembly and plastic components production in Smyrna; conducted seven million-dollar fundraising campaigns to benefit the local United Way; was

included in the best-selling book, *The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America* for the second time; was named the most productive car plant and most productive truck plant in North America for five years according to the *Harbour Report*; established a powertrain assembly plant in Decherd, employing about 400 employees in Franklin County; received numerous awards, including the 1994 Tennessee Quality Award, the Governor's Award and the 1999 Torch Award for Ethics from the Murfreesboro Better Business Bureau; and

WHEREAS, under Mr. Benefield's leadership, the Nissan vehicles built in Smyrna have been consistently ranked at the top of quality and consumer surveys; the Nissan Xterra was named the "North American Truck of the Year" and *Motor Trend* "2000 Sports/Utility of the Year," and the Frontier King Cab was named "The Best Compact Pickup 2WD" by IntelliChoice; and

WHEREAS, Nissan has invested nearly \$1.5 billion at its two Middle Tennessee plants where its 5,700 employees manufacture Xterra sport utility vehicles, Frontier pickup trucks and Altima midsize sedans; assemble engines, transaxles and rear axles; produce plastic bumper fascias and fuel tanks; and provide stampings and engines for the Nissan Quest and Mercury Villager minivans; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Benefield's retirement will bring to an end his thirty-eight years of outstanding service in the automotive industry. After graduating from the Georgia Institute of Technology with a degree in industrial management, he followed the path of his father and grandfather to the Ford Motor Company, rising rapidly through the ranks during his eighteen years with Ford and holding the position of plant manager of the Dearborn, Michigan assembly plant at the time of his decision to join Nissan. While still at Ford, he received his M.B.A. degree from Georgia State University; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Benefield is an active and important part of the Middle Tennessee community and his profession, participating in numerous civic organizations; he is the founding member and first president of the Tennessee Automotive Manufacturer's Association, and was a board member of Nissan North America, Inc.; the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce;

the Bank of America, Nashville; the Middle Tennessee Council, Boy Scouts of America; the Baptist Hospital Corporate Board; the Tennessee Association of Business; and the Tennessee Business Roundtable; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Benefield is a board member of Rutherford 20/20, a long-range economic development initiative; serves on the President's Advisory Council at Middle Tennessee State University; was named the 1987 Business Person of the Year by the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce and is an alumnus of both Leadership Nashville and Leadership Rutherford. He has received the Distinguished Eagle Award from the Boys Scouts of America and the 1998 Silver Beaver Award from the Middle Tennessee Chapter of the Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Benefield can be proud of what Nissan has accomplished during his time there and his pleasure in working with the men and women in the Smyrna and Decherd operations; he said of his experience with Nissan: "This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity — not just a new plant, a new startup, but a whole new company with a new management style and a new operating philosophy. It was a chance to start a company, doing what you love to do, from an absolute blank piece of paper...a chance to see if the way you thought it ought to be done really would work"; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Benefield will be relinquishing his responsibilities to Dan Gaudette, senior vice president, U.S. Manufacturing, for Nissan North America, Inc. Mr. Gaudette has been with Nissan since December of 1980 and is currently senior vice president, Operations, in Smyrna; and

WHEREAS, a native of our neighboring state of Georgia, Mr. Benefield was born in Atlanta on February 7, 1940. He now lives in Murfreesboro, where he enjoys the love and support of his wife, Evelyn, and their three daughters and two sons-in-laws, Alesia and Dave Normand, Cindy and Chip Haynes and Tammy Benefield; and three grandchildren, Tyler and Brian Normand and Claire Haynes; and

WHEREAS. Mr. Benefield exemplifies the spirit and allegiance to family and community that is the foundation of this nation; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Jerry Benefield has demonstrated a remarkable ability to motivate others to reach their full potential, winning the respect and admiration of his peers; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we extend to Jerry Benefield our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement and every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.